

IEPA Log No.: **C-0591-15**
CoE appl. #: **2015-00660**

Public Notice Beginning Date: **May 13, 2016**
Public Notice Ending Date: **May 27, 2016**

Section 401 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act
Amendments of 1972

Section 401 Water Quality Certification to Discharge into Waters of the State

Public Notice/Fact Sheet Issued By:

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Bureau of Water
Division of Water Pollution Control
Permit Section
1021 North Grand Avenue East
Post Office Box 19276
Springfield, Illinois 62794-9276
217/782-3362

Name and Address of Discharger: Illinois Department of Transportation, 201 West Center Court,
Schaumburg, IL 60196-1096

Discharge Location: Section 3, T32N, R9E of the 3rd P.M. in Will County between Wilmington and
Braidwood

Name of Receiving Water: Unnamed Wetlands and Waters of the U.S.

Project Description: Coal City Road / Illinois Route 53 crossing.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) has received an application for a Section 401 water quality certification to discharge into the waters of the state associated with a Section 404 permit application received by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Public Notice period will begin and end on the dates indicated in the heading of this Public Notice. The last day comments will be received will be on the Public Notice period ending date unless a commenter demonstrating the need for additional time requests an extension to this comment period and the request is granted by the IEPA. Interested persons are invited to submit written comments on the project to the IEPA at the above address. Commenters shall provide their names and addresses along with comments on the certification application. Commenters may include a request for public hearing. The certification and notice number(s) must appear on each comment page.

The attached Fact Sheet provides a description of the project and the antidegradation assessment.

The application, Public Notice/Fact Sheet, comments received, and other documents are available for inspection and may be copied at the IEPA at the address shown above between 9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday when scheduled by the interested person.

If written comments or requests indicate a significant degree of public interest in the certification application, the IEPA may, at its discretion, hold a public hearing. Public notice will be given 30 days before any public hearing. If a Section 401 water quality certification is issued, response to relevant comments will be provided at the time of the certification. For further information, please call Thaddeus Faught at 217/782-3362.

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Fact Sheet for Antidegradation Assessment

Illinois Department of Transportation – Unnamed Wetlands and Waters of the U.S. – Will County

COE # LRC-2015-00660

IEPA Log # C-0591-15

Contact: Diane Shasteen (217/558-2012)

May 13, 2016

Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT; “Applicant”) has applied for Section 401 water quality certification for permanent impacts of approximately 2.63 acres and temporary impacts of 0.54 acres of jurisdictional wetlands within the designated project area. The proposed project, located in between the City of Wilmington and the City of Braidwood in Section 3, Township 32 North, Range 9 East, includes roadway improvements at the Coal City Road/IL Route 53 at-grade road crossing of the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR). This project is a component of the Chicago to St. Louis High Speed Rail (HSR) Project and includes new roadway work adjacent to the tracks, improvement of roadway approaches to the railroad crossing for safety and drainage, signage, culvert work, drainage ditch improvements, and utility relocation. Realignment of adjacent roadways and cross streets is required to meet geometric and safety requirements and new safety crossing protection devices are needed in order to accommodate the increase in train speed. The purpose of this project is to enhance the safety of the road crossing over the UPRR which is needed to accommodate the increased train speeds that will result from the HSR project. The project will impact approximately 2.63 wetland acres along the roadways which will be mitigated with the purchase of 7.61 acres of wetland credit from the Morris Wetland Mitigation Bank located in Grundy County.

Identification and Characterization of the Affected Water Body.

In July and October 2014, Olsson Associates conducted wetland delineations within the project boundaries. Huff and Huff conducted wetland delineations in August and September 2015 to verify wetland boundaries and identify additional potential wetlands. Twelve wetlands (2, 3, 4(O5), O3, O4, O6-O12) and two roadside ditches (OD5 and OD6) were delineated within the proposed project boundaries. Four wetlands (2, 3, 4, O3) were determined to be High Quality Aquatic Resources wetlands (HQAR) with FQI scores of 23.3, 24.1, 27.7, and 20.82, respectively. FQI scores for the remaining delineated wetlands ranged from 0.0 to 10.73. Four additional sites (O4, O9, O12 and OD5) were found to be located within or near Illinois Natural Area Inventory (INAI) sites. Table 1 (adapted from tables supplied by the Applicant) contains FQI scores, number and percentage of impacted acres, mitigation ratios, and total mitigation acres for the delineated wetlands and roadside ditches.

The proposed project will temporarily impact 0.54 acres, 0.2 acres of O4 and 0.34 acres of O12, due to temporary pavement constructed on roadside ditches. These areas will be removed and regraded following construction. Permanent impacts include approximately 2.63 wetland and roadside ditch acres. Impacts to these wetlands/WOUS are unavoidable and will be mitigated at ratios of 3:1 for HQAR wetlands and INAI sites and 1.5:1 for all other impacts. A total of 7.61 acres of wetland credit will be obtained within the same watershed from the Morris Wetland Mitigation Bank located in Grundy County.

Table 1: Jurisdictional Wetland/Waters of the U.S. Impact Summary

Wetland Name	Total Area (Acres)	Floristic Quality Index	Impact (acres)	Percentage of wetland impacted	Mitigation Ratio	Mitigation Acres
2	2.47	23.3	0.64	26	3:1	1.92
3	1.55	24.1	1.05	68	3:1	3.15
O3	1.77	20.82	0	0	NA	NA
O4	1.34	10.73	0.26	3	3:1	0.78
4/O5	0.69	27.7	0.02	19	3:1	0.06
O6	0.03	3.54	0.01	33	1.5:1	0.015
O7	0.06	0	0.001	2	1.5:1	0.0015
O8	0.06	5.2	0.01	17	1.5:1	0.015
O9	0.01	5.2	0.007	70	3:1	0.021
O10	0.14	5.2	0	0	NA	NA
O11	0.1	5	0.05	50	1.5:1	0.075
O12	3.84	6.64	0.29	8	3:1	0.87
OD5*	NA	NA	0.18	NA	3:1	0.540
OD6*	NA	NA	0.11	NA	1.5:1	0.165
Total			2.63			7.61

* Continuous roadside ditch- total area, FQI, and percent impacts not available

Identification of Proposed Pollutant Load Increases or Potential Impacts on Uses.

The pollutant load increases that could occur include possible increases in suspended solids during construction and increases in pollutants due to increased traffic and impervious surfaces throughout the project area. The Applicant will follow IDOT's Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction to guide erosion and sediment control efforts. An Independent Soil Erosion and Sediment Control (SESC) Inspector will be utilized to oversee the project. All disturbed areas will be seeded or sodded after construction activities in the area have concluded. There will be an incremental change of 0.2 lane miles as compared to existing roadway conditions, resulting in a minimal increase in pollutant loading. Planned drainage systems will divert runoff to vegetated ditches for treatment which will minimize potential impacts. No adverse effects are expected to the wetlands or WOUS due to pollutant load increase.

Fate and Effect of Parameters Proposed for Increased Loading.

The increase in suspended solids will be local and temporary. Permanent and temporary SESC measures including perimeter erosion barriers, temporary ditch checks, temporary erosion control seeding, and permanent stabilization will be utilized to minimize any increase in these disturbances and prevent further impacts to the wetlands and roadside ditches in the project area. A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan along with a Best Management Practices Management and Monitoring Plan will be implemented to minimize disturbances within the project area. Improvements to existing drainage conditions include the replacement of existing culverts with new reinforced concrete culvert

pipes with flared end sections and ditch improvements such as re-sloping, cleaning out tree and grass over growth, and establishing a 2' wide bottom.

The Applicant will purchase 7.61 acres of wetland credit from the Morris Wetland Mitigation Bank in Grundy County, the result of a 3:1 mitigation ratio applied to 2.447 HQAR wetland acres/INAI sites and a 1.5:1 ratio applied to the remaining 0.181 acres of permanent wetland/WOUS impacts.

Purpose and Social & Economic Benefits of the Proposed Activity.

The proposed roadway improvement project is a component of the Chicago to St. Louis HSR; in particular the development, implementation, and operation of HSR service between Joliet and Dwight and roadway improvements at five at-grade road crossings between Wilmington and Braidwood. The proposed roadway/railroad crossing improvements will improve safe travels around local streets, improve roadway approaches to the railroad crossing for safety and drainage, and provide new safety crossing protection devices that are needed to accommodate the increase in train speed. The project will also include added signage, culvert work, drainage ditch improvements, utility relocation, and landscaping.

Assessments of Alternatives for Less Increase in Loading or Minimal Environmental Degradation.

IDOT assessed five different alternatives to the project including a no-build alternative and a base design alternative. There would be no increase in pollution loading if a no-build alternative was chosen; however, this alternative was considered infeasible due to the traffic safety concerns associated with the increased train speed. The base design for this project included impacts to approximately 3.08 wetland/WOUS acres. Alternatives 1 through 3 included designs to reduce impacts to wetlands. Alternative 1 included a steepening of the side slopes, Alternative 2 steepened the side slopes to the point of needing guard rails, and Alternative 3 included a retaining wall and guard rail. All alternatives to the base design reduced the wetland impacts; however, the addition of guard rails and the retaining wall was determined to be cost prohibitive and not feasible. The chosen alternative, Alternative 1, does not compromise safety or cost and reduces wetland impacts in relationship to the base design.

Conclusion:

The construction of the proposed project will follow conditions set forth by the Agency and USACE. The completion of the roadway/railway improvements at Coal City Road and IL Route 53 is the most cost effective, viable means for improving roadway safety due to the increased train speeds. Erosion and sediment control plans will be implemented prior to and through construction activities to reduce the pollution load. Wetland mitigation of 7.61 acres of wetland credit will be purchased from the Morris Wetland Mitigation Bank in Grundy County, the result of a 3:1 and 1.5:1 mitigation ratios applied to 2.63 acres of impacts to wetlands and roadside ditches.

Summary Comments of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Regional Planning Commissions, Zoning Boards or Other Entities

The Biological Resource Review Memorandum, dated December 17, 2014, indicated that State-listed threatened or endangered species and natural areas exist in the vicinity of the project location. Surveys for the presence of listed species or their preferred habitats and presence of Illinois Natural Areas and

high quality prairie conducted for the Joliet to Dwight Track Improvement Project were used to determine potential impacts from the proposed roadway/railway improvement project. No natural areas or high quality prairies were found within the project boundaries. Potential suitable habitat of the Northern Long-Eared Bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) was found within the Environmental Survey Request limits of the proposed improvement at Coal City Road. Tree clearing will be limited from October 1 through March 31 and impacts to trees shall be mitigated in accordance with a draft tree replacement plan for the proposed Chicago to St. Louis HSR project.

Agency Conclusion.

This preliminary assessment was conducted pursuant to the Illinois Pollution Control Board regulation for Antidegradation found at 35 Ill. Adm. Code 302.105 (antidegradation standard) and was based on the information available to the Agency at the time this assessment was written. We tentatively find that the proposed activity will result in the attainment of water quality standards; that all technically and economically reasonable measures to avoid or minimize the extent of the proposed increase in pollutant loading have been incorporated into the proposed activity; and that this activity will benefit the community at large by improving the Coal City Road/Illinois Route 53 roadway and UPRR railway crossing to accommodate the increased train speeds of the HSR. New safety crossing protection devices, added signage, culvert work, and drainage ditch improvements will address safety and operational deficiencies of the roadway/railway crossing. Comments received during the 401 Water Quality Certification public notice period will be evaluated before a final decision is made by the Agency.